



S-E-C-R-E-T

50X1-HUM

had been employed for several months in the construction of an "immense" factory at Rudozem. They were living in a workers' housing project of three-story houses. Moreover, ten blocks of four-story houses were to be completed in November 1952, as well as schools, a municipal hospital, and a water reservoir.

This new "socialist city" is being built with Soviet machinery under the leadership of Soviet and Bulgarian Stakhanovites. According to other sources, a mining and drilling school has been established at Rudozem.

Besides Kurdzhali, Madan, and Rudozem, the Rhodope Basin includes the following mining centers, which have adopted in general the names of nearby hamlets: Burieva /Borieva/ Krushov Dol, Strashimir, and Erma Reka.

Two important Bulgarian-Soviet firms are in charge of the development of the Rhodope Basin: "Sovbolstroy" (Soviet-Bulgarian Construction Enterprise) and "Gorubso" (Bulgarian-Soviet Forestry and Mining Organization). These firms employ a large number of workers and use a great deal of material. They undoubtedly make use of many Soviet machines and technicians.

Information on this area is scanty, because it is a border province and a mining district where traffic of outsiders is restricted. On 24 October 1952, it was reported that the new aqueduct at Madan was in operation. On 25 October 1952, the opening of a new public motor transportation system, connecting all the points of the Rhodope mining basin, was reported. Finally, the detailed program for the new season of the Rhodope Theater, which serves the whole border region, was made available to the public. Even the recreation of the labor camp personnel was taken into consideration, and the responsibility for entertainment was given to a traveling troupe of entertainers.

The exploitation of copper veins [in this vicinity] was carried on before World War II. It has been known that second-grade mica was present near Saeljan. It seems probable that new and important copper-bearing deposits have been discovered close to the old ones.

The Kurdzhali installations now process not only copper, but also zinc and tin and possibly chrome.

The mineral deposits of the Rhodope Mountains are most complex, and the presence of several metals in the same deposit would not surprise geologists. Through modern prospecting methods, deposits can be discovered which earlier prospectors, using more primitive methods, had overlooked.

Observers are wondering if the presence of uranium salts is not the actual reason for this intensive exploitation. It may be noted that there was a recent recall of Soviet technicians from the old uranium exploitation center of Bukhovo (25 kilometers northeast of Sofia), and that they left for an unknown destination, which may have been Rudozem.

An established fact which may be the cause of this unusual activity is that German engineers, during the World War II occupation, discovered a great quantity of lead veins which yielded ore with a 90-percent lead content. Geologists estimate that the lead veins extend to the subsoil of the Greek Rhodope Mountains. It is even affirmed that the Greeks have begun to exploit their area.

It has been revealed that the Rudozem works on the Bulgarian side are strongly protected by large contingents of frontier guards, which were reinforced recently.

Besides the lead, it is possible that traces of asbestos have been found. Asbestos, as well as silver and manganese, is believed to exist there in small quantities.

- 2 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

50X1-HUM

The presence of oil seems fairly improbable in that solely mountainous region.

The 1952 lead production for the entire country was, at most, 20,000 tons. The 1952 copper production was undoubtedly 30,000 to 40,000 tons. The deposits are scattered and accessible only with difficulty. Their exploitation would not be considered very profitable in a free economy.

It will be interesting to follow the future development of the Rhodope mining basin. Its secrets have not been exhausted, and it can be of great service to the Soviet war economy.

[redacted]  
[redacted] the lead ore discovered in the Rhodope mining region near Rudozem and Madan is extremely rich and contains 90 percent lead. It will be easy to mine because it is on the surface.

50X1-HUM

The Soviets, who are directing the exploitation [of the mine] and the export [of the ore], are particularly interested in obtaining immediately as much ore as possible and they are concentrating all their attention on extractive operations.

The number of Soviet specialists at the Rudozem-Madan lead mines must be considerable. Railroad authorities have decided to operate a sleeping car three times a week between Sofia and Podkova. Podkova is about 40 kilometers from the mine site. Needless to say, such care would not be taken for Bulgarian officials.

- E N D -

- 3 -

S-E-C-R-E-T